

5 July 2016		ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Bank Accounts, Passports and Birth Certificates held by Looked After Children		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Paul Coke – Service Manager, Through Care Services		
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Children’s Social Care (CATO)		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report updates members of the Committee in respect to bank accounts, passports and birth certificates for our looked after children.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Committee to monitor this area to ensure there is continual improvement in partnership with officers and the children in care council.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 As part of good practice at a local level, the Local Authority is of the view that every child/young person should when they become looked after have access to or be provided with a birth certificate and passport.
- 2.2 The Children’s IT System, (Liquid Logic Children’s System, LCS) is able to record the relevant details of a child’s/young person’s passport and birth certificate details on their file.
- 2.3 A request was made by the Corporate Parenting Committee to provide an update as to how the Local Authority is ensuring that looked after children have passports and birth certificates. .

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Issues

- 3.1.1 The Department continues to make progress in ensuring all looked after children have the appropriate documentation that enables them to have identification (and ability to open a bank account), such as birth certificate and passport.
- 3.1.2 It was clear that information regarding these documents was not always recorded in the right place, thus did not provide a true picture of how many children/young people had them.
- 3.1.3 This continues to be a challenge, but due to our recruitment of newly qualified social workers we now have a more stable staff team that are making improvements in this area, albeit slowly.
- 3.1.4 The team administrators are supporting the social workers with the task of inputting the passport and birth certificate data into the LCS System.
- 3.1.5 Parents and carers are requested to provide birth certificates and passports at the point that children become looked after.
- 3.1.6 As a Senior Manager I chair a Permanency Planning Meeting for all looked after children between their first and second looked after children's review (within four months of a child becoming looked after). This enables the Department to ensure there is no drift in the permanency planning for our looked after children and that we are clear in the direction of travel the care plan is heading.
- 3.1.7 The looked after population within Thurrock has increased, especially the numbers of our unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The Department currently works with 85- 90 unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are looked after.
- 3.1.8 At the time of writing this report the Department had 336 children/young people looked after. The increased numbers have added to the challenge in this area.
- 3.1.9 Excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children and children who have been looked after for less than 4 week:
- **155** children & young people have birth certificates and passports
 - **83** children and young people have been identified who do not have both birth certificates and passports.
 - **85** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children with no birth certificates and or passports. This cohort will have an Application Registration Card (ARC Card) that is given to them by the Home Office.

- 3.1.10 I have identified those young people who are within the 83 cohort and discussed the matter with the respective team managers, who are now addressing this with the social workers concerned.
- 3.1.11 I have discussed the issue of bank accounts with Essex Savers, Credit Union, who have a number of outlets within the Essex area.
- 3.1.12 In order to set up a Savings Account, the young people will require 3 types of documentation, which will provide the following information
- Proof of age
 - Proof of address
 - Nationality
- 3.1.13 A challenge will be providing documentation for our unaccompanied asylum seeking children. As most of them come with no ID it is very difficult to obtain birth certificates or passports, which in turn makes it difficult to open bank accounts.
- 3.1.14 Some young people do have various forms of identification which again is difficult to verify its authenticity, but we can use the ID from the Home Office as proof of age and a letter from Social Care to verify their address.
- 3.1.15 The cost of opening an account is £3.00. Essex Savers are willing to explore what they can do in terms of savings accounts for our unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 As part of good practice, the department should ensure that our looked after children/young people have the relevant documentation for identity purposes but also for when they transition into adulthood.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

N/A

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager - Children and Adults

This is a necessary requirement for our looked after children/young people and is part of the current budget within the Through Care Services.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

The Local Authority has a duty to provide services to our looked after children/young people and having the proper documentation is good practice and important for all in terms of identification and transition to adulthood.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community and Development Equalities
Manager**

It is important where possible that regardless of race, religion, culture, disability, sexual orientation, all looked after children/young people should be provided with the correct documentation that confirms their identity and enables them to transition into adulthood.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. Appendices to the report

N/A

Report Author:

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Children's Services, Care and Targeted Outcomes